

Character Traits



MACBETH



Macbeth

Valiant – “He is full so valiant” – irony (Duncan, 1.4)

Ambitious

Respected

Superstitious – examples?

Brave – first described as ‘Brave Macbeth’ (Sergeant, 1.2)

Warrior

Guilt – evidence?

Ruthless

Schemer

Evil – last described as a ‘dead butcher’ (Malcolm, 5.7)

Lady Macbeth



Loving

Intense

Insane

Strong – evidence?

Has inner turmoil

Schemer

Loyal

Dramatic irony – 1.6 “Fair and noble hostess, we are
your guests tonight” (Duncan)

Minor characters – what do they help us understand about major characters? Is their relationship supportive or a source of conflict?

- Macduff
- Steadfast, Loyal, Noble, Warrior, Patriotic
- **Similarities** to Macbeth: they are both Scottish nobles, both well-respected warriors
- **Differences:** Macduff doesn't react with anger (Macbeth killed King's guard in 2.2), he isn't tempted by power (Malcolm's speech 4.3), turns his grief and sorrow into vengeance not only for himself but for his country
- **What he teaches us about Macbeth:** Macduff would be an ideal king (4.3). His calm demeanour only serves to accentuate Macbeth's evil

Minor characters



- Banquo
- Warrior, brave, sceptical, loyal
- **Similarities** to Macbeth: they are best friends, they fight together
- **Differences:** Banquo warns Macbeth against trusting the witches' prophecies, he isn't tempted by thoughts of power – seems to be loyal to the King to the end
- **What he teaches us about Macbeth:** that one does not need to be corrupt and evil to be a good warrior / to succeed in life.

How are Banquo and Macduff different?



- Macduff is the first to suspect Macbeth
- Banquo suspects him soon after, but keeps quiet about it
- In a Shakespearian sense, could we look at him as having to die for this silence. Is this his payback?



The Witches



- **Purpose?** To set the tone of the play as something evil / sinister
- **Similarities to Macbeth**– they echo each others words. He fears them and yet he becomes more like them than any other character in the play
- They use Macbeth like a puppet – they play upon his weaknesses and show him only part of the truth
- Some of their prophecies are self-fulfilling (Macbeth becoming king) but not all – Birnam Wood? It is hard to imagine this any other way...
- Tremendously powerful and utterly wicked

Duncan



- Shakespeare provides us with a perfect example of a valiant King
- Although we don't hear from him after 1.6, he remains an **important force in the play** and serves to **remind us of Kingly values**
- Malcolm and Macduff's conversation in 4.3 echo his values... thus he is remembered and lives on through these characters
- However, he was very trusting which was perhaps his downfall



- How would you approach an essay on contrasting characters?
- Who would you choose?
- How would you structure a response?